1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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earth. They state that in the old days there were no prophets; only the ritual officials mentioned earlier. The records of European travellers are not explicit enough to confirm or reject this statement. Poncet says that among the Nuer in his day were rich and important persons, honoured after their death, whom he calls *devins ou sorciers* and *jongleurs*,[1] and Brun-Rollet says that the Nuer had a kind of pope for whom they had veneration akin to worship, but his account is too fanciful to carry weight.[2] Whilst it is difficult to believe that there were

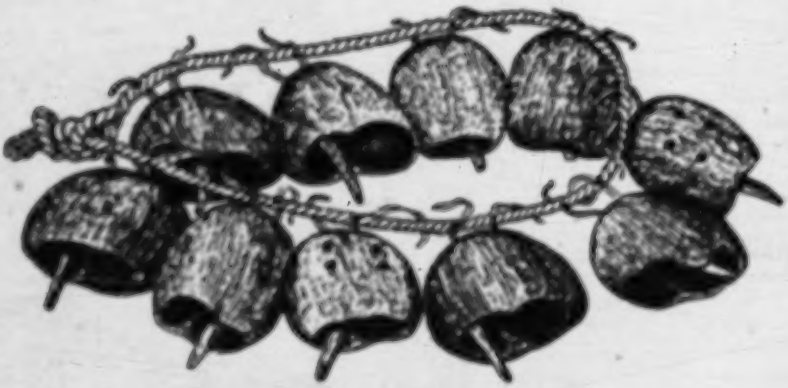

FIG. 13. Calf's bell-necklace of palm nuts.

no cases of possession sixty years ago we must, in the absence of conflicting evidence, accept so unanimous a declaration by Nuer that there was no possession by Sky-gods, and it seems fairly certain that if there were any prophets at that time their influence was restricted to small localities and had not the tribal significance of more recent times. There is some evidence that the developement of Nuer prophets was related to the spread of Mahdism from the Northern Sudan. However that may be, there is no doubt that powerful prophets arose about the time when Arab intrusion into Nuerland was at its height and that after the reconquest of the Sudan they were more respected and had more influence than any other persons in Nuerland.

Nevertheless, we consider that the power of these prophets, even of the most successful ones, has been exaggerated and that

[1] Poncet, op. cit., p. 40. [2] Brun-Rollet, op. cit., p. 222.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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In a big camp there is often dancing at night and youths and girls pay evening visits to neighbouring camps to take part in the dances. There is a special dry season dance quite different from the drum dances of the wet season. It is called *dompiny*. A small hole is dug in the dancing place and a piece of hide is stretched tightly across it. A length of cord is stretched over the hide and is pegged on either side of it. A small stick is placed on the hide over the centre of the hole and the cord is supported by the top of the stick and slopes on either side of it to the ground. The cord is thus kept taught. The hole acts as a sounding box. The performer obtains music by striking the cord with a thin stick held in his right hand as he sits cross-legged before it and by muting it with his left hand or with a stick held in his left hand. By this means he produces rhythm. Sometimes another man beats at the same time with his hand on the hide near the sounding hole. The people dance and sing, men dancing opposite women. A man holds his hands above his head like an ox's horns and as he sings he steps backwards and the girls opposite him move towards him. They thus circle round the musical instrument.

Girls sometimes have their own singing parties in these camps. They sit and sing to a rhythm made by slapping their outstretched thighs. This is called *palpal*. Youths who are courting the girls often join them and take part in the singing. It is customary for young men to visit girls and court them when the day's work is done.

If there is no dancing at night—and in the smaller camps where there are few girls, and these mostly kinswomen, the young men do not care to start a dance—the inmates of the camp chat in their windscreens and at the thresholds of their huts for an hour or two after the evening meal and then fall off to sleep. Sometimes they chat till close on midnight and occasionally a man who is happy walks amid the cattle, ringing an ox-bell and singing for an hour or more. Sometimes an animal has strayed from the herd. Then everyone is sad and its owners are out in the bush till late at night searching for it.

One day in a Nuer cattle camp is like another. Calves are born and we see time passing in the stages of their growth. Nor does life

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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000 the pistol was brought and another bullet was fired into the lifeless body of the victim.

One wonders what happened during the next hour when the women came to fill their water-jars. What would their thoughts be as they stepped down the river bank and at a turn in the path encountered the brainless, tailless body of a huge crocodile? Would they think of the dreadful fate from which they had been saved, just because a launch happened to pass that way a few minutes before, or would they grieve because the choicest steak had already been taken?

512 The woman has the bulk of the work, but she seems to expect it. When the day's toil is over, the dura pounded, the two meals cooked, the water carried, the children cared for, the mother sits there in the light of the smudge fire which is made to keep mosquitoes away. She has had [521] a busy day. Now they all sit around in the firelight, visiting, or telling tales of long ago, or maybe they are telling ● [534] riddles. Some one may be strumming a native-made stringed musical instrument, another may be singing, and [513] yet the conversation goes on uninterruptedly. If in the light of the moon, bedtime does not come early—probably not until ten or twelve o'clock or later—but if it is in the dark of the moon, they seek sleep earlier and nine or ten o'clock finds the village quiet. Another day is past, the woman is in her home, her children about her, her husband satisfied with his food for the day and happy with her. What more could she wish?

512 853 The baby must be cared for during the day and taken up and nursed every time it cries. The Nuer baby is nursed until it is at least two years of age, and more often until it is three or even four. They have a superstition that usually keeps the husband and wife from having 000 another child while a child is not yet weaned. Water

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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down in groups of four each, and the player who picked up the one ball out of the last group finds that he has three in his last group now, while the other player who took three balls out of the last group is amazed to find that his last group now contains but one. They play it over and over again and enjoy it each time, but cannot explain it. 524

One boy was seen to do a trick quite cleverly by changing a mud-ball from one hand to another much to the amazement of his friends.

Another game is played with mud-balls in which points are scored as cattle with which to buy a wife. The Nuer enjoy this game very much, but they assure me it is far too difficult for me to learn and much beyond my feminine comprehension.

Boys make a ring of cane-leaves and then throw it, trying to throw a stick through it as it rolls.

They also play a game resembling shinny, and are quite clever at it.

Girls often play a game with pieces of cane-stalk about eight or ten inches long. One throws them on the ground and the way in which the different sticks fall indicates how many cattle will be paid as the marriage price; other points count as different things pertaining to the marriage. The pieces are thrown again and again, some positions in which they fall indicating the loss of a cow.

The girls play a game in which the hands are repeatedly clapped on the knees, and they chant a little song as they clap.

Little girls play house, pounding up clods of earth for dura, sifting it in order to get coarse particles out, and imitating their mothers in their work about the home.

On moonlight nights, the dance is a favourite amusement of both children and young people. A drum is made, possibly out of an old kerosene tin which has had the ends 535 534

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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535 cut out and sheepskin pulled tightly over it, or it may be
534 a large gourd with a sheepskin covering, or possibly it is made of a piece of the trunk of a tree, hollowed out and covered with sheepskin. But whatever its construction it emits enough sound to please any Nuer when it is beaten in the dance. The drummer beats a rather steady, rhythmic tune on it. One person usually chants a line of a song while all the other dancers chant an alternate line which serves as a chorus.

535 The dance is a group formation. Couples do not dance together.

The men run in in a long line and dance in a group. High jumping is a feature and one is amazed at the height they achieve. Quick advances upon an imaginary foe are made with much brandishing of spears.

One girl leads the group of girls, facing them and leading them as they advance and retreat before her. They keep time to the music with a quick movement of the head and hips.

534 A fiddle is made of a large piece of wood which has been hollowed out, or of a half-gourd, sheepskin being tightly laced over it. Strings are made of gut, and one can play as many as four different notes on some of the fiddles. While the player plays a tune on the strings of the fiddle he keeps up a steady, low accompaniment by thrumming the bowl of the fiddle with the fingers of the other hand.

533 Nuer are naturally musical, and many of them are quite good singers. They improvise many of their songs as occasion requires. Many of their songs pertain to marriage, many of them laud cattle or persons and proclaim their praises. Sometimes they voice their disapproval of some individual in song so that all may hear. They have a lullaby for babies also. Some of their songs are of a

SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

Do not slay them jestingly.[1]
Mani goes with a rush,
He goes on for ever,
The sons of Jagei are proud in the byres,[2]
Proud that they always raid the Dinka.

I do not know the time or circumstances of composition of this hymn, but as it not only exults in defeats of the Dinka and asks for victory over the people of the Nuba hills but also demands the destruction of the British it must be fairly recent and probably dates from the early days of British occupation of the Southern Sudan. Dr. Lienhardt has recorded a hymn about *deng* which vividly suggests the mobility of the spirits of the air and the ubiquity of Spirit. A man says he is tired of the demands made by *deng* and that he will move. But *deng* replies

A man avoiding *deng*
Will find *deng* in front,
On the right he will find *deng*,
On the left he will find *deng*,
Behind him he will find *deng*.

In another hymn he recorded there is a metaphor in which protection of the people by *deng* is compared to the coiling of a python around its young. These hymns are, I believe, always the creations of prophets, and Nuer say that they come to them in dreams, unlike ordinary songs or poems which men construct for themselves when idling, as when herding in the grazing grounds. We need not concern ourselves greatly with their word to word meaning. Nuer do not do so, or even know it, and the songs may be sung on occasions which in no way concern the particular spirits they are addressed to and for which the words have no relevance, the songs merely serving to create atmosphere and to express a general sense and intention. I have been told that the hymns sometimes come to a prophet through a drum, called *bul kwoth*, spirit's drum, dedicated to his spirit, which is thought to be in some way immanent in it. These drums, which are beaten at dances held in honour of the spirits to which they are dedicated, are formally dedicated by being rubbed with ashes, in the same

[1] Do not trifle with them but strike them hard.

[2] The Jagei are a small group of Nuer tribes; but since the Nuer believe that they were created in their territory the word probably here refers to the Nuer as a whole.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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way as an animal is dedicated, while a short invocation is made. They are decorated with beads and metal rings. I was told that now and again, especially after dreams, a prophet rubs his spirit's drum with ashes, and sometimes also with butter, and asks God for peace and happiness. A prophet also builds a mud shrine, called *yik* or, if it is shaped like a windscreen, *buor*, to his spirit, the largest monument of the first kind being the pyramid of *deng* in the Lou tribal territory (p. 306).

IV

I now come to the most difficult, and the most important, part of this survey. How do Nuer conceive of these spirits in relation to God? I do not attempt yet to make a full analysis of the notion of *kwoth*, but only to discuss a limited part of it, the nature of the spirits of the air; though what is said about them has some bearing on the nature of other spirits and of Spirit in general. The matter is, for us, complex and confusing, and the conclusion I reached about it, that the spirits of the air are conceived of as both separate beings and yet also as different manifestations of God, may at first sight seem to hold a contradiction.

We may say to begin with that there is no question of Nuer regarding these spirits as beings of the same importance as *kwoth a nhial*. Whatever else they may be thought to be they are not thought of as beings independent of and equal to him. There is only one God. This is evident from a number of facts.

In the first place, it is shown by the way Nuer regard the beliefs of neighbouring peoples. It creates no problem for them when they find other peoples approaching God under different titles and in different ways from their own. Some Nuer, in spite of the general isolation of the Nuer and their lack of interest in other peoples, are aware that in religious matters neighbouring peoples differ to a greater or lesser degree from themselves. Some of them know something of Dinka religious beliefs and ceremonies, and a few of them are also aware, though Islam has made no impression on them, that Arab traders have their own form of worship and, though the influence of the Christian missions has been negligible,[1] that the Christian missionaries and their converts have

[1] In 1940, some years after I had concluded my research, there were 464 Nuer (250 Catholics and 214 Protestants), easily the lowest figure for